

Ayooob on Firearms:

What's next? What can you do?

By Massad Ayooob

On September 11, 2001, the commentators say, "Everything changed." The extent of that change is still being measured by each of us.

Every one of us will remember where we were when we first learned of the atrocities of 9/11/01. It was to our generation what Pearl Harbor had been to our parents. Amidst the horror and the rage, there was a distinct sense of loss of innocence...and of present, continuing danger.

The degree to which American lives will be changed remains uncertain. There is a strong drive to acclimatize the public to a necessary loss of liberty in the name of security. The privacy matters are a concept I will leave to John Silveira, who is better informed and more articulate on the privacy issues than I. Suffice to say that I believe Benjamin Franklin had the best handle on the matter when he said: *"They that can give up essential liberty to obtain a little temporary safety deserve neither liberty nor safety."*

We are told by the pundits, "Everything has changed." It's the details that are not clear yet. In the days and weeks that followed, there was a run on guns and ammunition and gas masks. As we look to countries that have dealt with terrorism at home, we see something similar. During Desert Storm, we all watched on CNN as Israeli citizens donned gas masks in fear of chemical attacks by Saddam Hussein. Osama bin Laden, considered by most Americans the architect of the attack of the 11th, has been known to experiment with biotoxins as tools of ter-

ror. His minions were exploring the possibilities of crop-duster aircraft, apparently with such forays in mind. Never mind whether or not the crop-duster is a viable tool for dealing such mass death. The point is, they were looking for it.

An M-19 surplus gas mask strikes me as a sensible purchase. It also makes sense to have a few cheap gauze masks in each vehicle and in the home. They were a godsend to the rescuers in New York, who had to work in a choking haze of asbestos dust and other toxic substances.

Those I know in the intelligence services tell me that the World Trade Center and the Pentagon attacks were only the first shot of the fusillade. Enough bin Laden puppets have reportedly been sent underground in the U.S. to deliver many more atrocities. Given the history of such suspects in the past, there are certain patterns of attack that can be anticipated.

Attacks on water, electric, and travel

The initial attacks were directed at some of the most high profile structures in major cities to "make a statement" and maximize fear with huge casualties. Poisoning reservoirs is doable, and it's something counter-terrorism experts have warned us about for a long time. Terrorists will also be aware of what our concerns were as the nation prepared for Y2K. Attacks on power plants would fulfill those fears.

You saw what the incidents of September 11 did to air travel. Recall also that in early October a whacko slashed the throat of a Greyhound bus driver in the Nashville area, killing six when the vehicle crashed. This



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turned out not to be a terrorist incident, but Greyhound still froze all its bus travel for a good seven hours. It would not be difficult for terrorists to engineer events that could temporarily paralyze air, road, and rail traffic, resulting in a shortage of food and other necessary goods. All the more reason to go back to the "Y2K preparedness level": Lots of food and water on hand, generator ready, the whole bit.

Travel concerns

I am less inclined than usual at the moment to drive across large bridges. These big structures will go in a spectacular way if blown up. The cutting of the enemy's bridges is ancient wartime doctrine. We are up against people who study the ways of the ancient warriors.

Similarly, I would rather not be spending a lot of time in tunnels. Back at the time of the Olympics in

Los Angeles, law enforcement was worried about terrorists hijacking a couple of fuel tanker trucks. If it's a one-mile tunnel, they travel a mile apart. As terrorist A is about to emerge from the tunnel, he pulls sideways to block all lanes of traffic, flips a toggle switch, and runs out of the tunnel and into the open air, leaving the truck behind. His partner, terrorist B, does the same at the entry to the tunnel, a mile behind him. The switches they've flipped arm time bombs that are set to go off very soon. The gasoline tankers erupt spectacularly, and every motorist trapped in that mile of tunnel is soon either burned to a crisp or suffocated.

In the early days after the Twin Towers destruction, FBI discovered that several suspects and people linked to them had acquired truck drivers' licenses, including licenses authorizing them to transport hazardous materials.

When aboard a plane

Many say that there will be no replay of the events of September 11 because of improved airline security, because the passengers will all rise up and overpower the hijackers as apparently happened on Flight 93 that terrible day, or because "they've already done that."

I can only reply, "What!?!?" The argument that "they won't do it again because they've already done it" is ludicrous. Yeah, and in 1945, Nagasaki was safe because our people had "already done that" at Hiroshima.

Improved security precautions? It'll be a while before enough sky marshals can be put in place to cover every domestic flight, if that ever happens at all.

In commercial air travel since this incident, I've only once been patted down, and then unprofessionally. Ceramic or plastic knives can still easily be smuggled through security

by those who don't worry about law breaking.

Travelers need to follow the paradigm of the heroes of Flight 93. That aircraft crashed in Pennsylvania fields instead of into the US Capitol Building or the White House because at least four brave Americans rose up against hijackers who were armed with edged weapons. Did one or more of those courageous passengers have small knives of their own, that they were able to put to good use? We may never know. We do know that in the foreseeable future, you won't have even a nail file to protect yourself if dangerous people arise in the passenger compartment to threaten others.

I am hoping we've seen the last of the "suicide hijackings." I suspect that the bin Laden moles still in the country have been glued to CNN and are aware that American air travelers are in a mood to rise up and, bare-handed, swarm the next set of hijackers. If they choose to abandon the tactics they used on September 11, it will not be because they're afraid of sky marshals. It will be because they're afraid of people just like you.

Body armor

At this writing, there is nothing that prevents the law-abiding citizen from wearing concealed body armor, either in public or aboard a jetliner. A very sharp stabbing implement can go through a vest that would stop a .44 Magnum slug, but in the field it rarely happens. The favored weapon of the 9/11/01 terrorists was a boxcutter. This is a slashing weapon, and even with big knives, a vest made of Kevlar or Spectra should defeat a slash attack.

Travel with a gun

As long as the danger exists, it's a good idea to bring a gun and ammunition with you when traveling long distances by automobile. If we have another incident like those of the

eleventh, you and I are unlikely to be the initial victims. However, air travel was shut down the last time, stranding people for days. If you have to strike out for home on land—perhaps hitch-hiking, if a run on rental cars has emptied the Hertz and Avis lots, and train or bus service have been disrupted—being unarmed and helpless just won't be any fun.

My wife was in Nevada on the 11th. There are a lot worse places to be trapped. However, thinking she might have to drive cross-country, she saw a need to be armed. I faxed her a copy of her Federal Firearms (dealer's) License, with which she bought herself a compact Smith & Wesson .38 Special at a local gunshop. Without the FFL, she would have been SOL, since Federal law prohibits a dealer from selling a handgun to a non-dealer who lives out of state. Lesson learned: she'll have her own gun in the suitcase on the next trip. At this writing, Federal Air Regulation 108.11 remains in effect, and it is legal for any law abiding citizen to fly on commercial carriers with an unloaded handgun in one hard-shell suitcase and the ammunition in another. Make sure, however, that you're going to be legal to be in possession of the gun where you land.

High risk days

Major American holidays will be high risk. Terrorists will appreciate the impact of alarming Americans on days when we traditionally celebrate peace and security: Thanksgiving, for instance, or Christmas. Large gatherings of citizens, such as stadium events, also have a high "target priority" according to what anti-terrorism experts teach us.

Carrying concealed

The first attacks focused on mass death in huge numbers. Terrorists know they can make the impact they want with lower body counts. As the

Israelis have learned, bombs detonated in department stores and restaurants achieve the evil goal of terrorizing and intimidating the public. Ditto “mass shootings.”

Some years ago, a group of terrorists opened fire on the citizenry on a city sidewalk in Israel. In seconds, the terrorists themselves were down; they had been riddled with the return fire of armed Israeli citizens. When he recovered from his wounds, the sole surviving terrorist seemed indignant about it: no one had warned him that his victims might shoot back.

The United States is a country which, historically, shoots back. If these incidents start happening here, I hope they at least happen in one of the increasing number of states where citizens can be licensed to carry concealed and loaded handguns in public. That can, as in the Israeli incident mentioned above, turn a massacre of the innocent into a short gunfight with as happy an ending as gunfights ever have.

Attacks in the hinterlands

What happened in New York City and Washington, DC has doubtless reinforced the decision of so many of our readers to live in rural areas. However, just because the first attacks hit metropolitan cities doesn't mean that plan is locked in stone for bin Laden and his followers. Again, look to Israel, whose enemies are largely the same as what we face now. Yes, the terrorists may strike in the heart of downtown Tel Aviv...but they are also known to strike at the remotest kibbutz.

Imagine yourself as Osama bin Laden. You want to strike terror into the heart of a people. You will reach not just to the capital, but to the heartlands and the hinterlands. People of the countryside see the cities as somehow remote from them. Terror visited upon the people of a village frightens those in the other villages. I

would not be at all surprised to see small town schools or town halls on the terrorists' list of targets.

Emergency personnel

Captured materials indicate that it was part of the terrorists' plan to strike the first target, allow rescue personnel to begin their efforts, then deliver a second strike in hopes of killing rescuers. They succeeded all too well. The death toll includes over 300 firefighters, numerous emergency medical personnel, 23 New York City police officers, and perhaps 37 Port Authority cops, plus at least one Federal agent. Neither the fire service nor the police service has ever taken such a massively fatal “hit” in the history of both institutions in the United States.

The tragedy has engendered more respect for the nation's emergency service providers. People are more likely to use all their fingers when they wave at a cop lately.

If you have lived for any length of time in a rural community, you probably know volunteers on the ambulance service, volunteer firefighters, and part-time cops. You may have been invited to join one or more of these agencies. People volunteering to make up for lack of a populous tax base that can pay for a full-time, full-service department is a longstanding tradition in rural America. Be advised, those admirable people may be in more danger than before if terrorism moves to the hinterlands.

The perpetrator of what was previously our nation's worst terrorist attack, Tim McVeigh, was pulled over on a highway and captured by a lone state trooper. No cops in America work lonelier posts than the US Border Patrol, yet it was they who captured Ahmad Rasham before he could fulfill his admitted goal of detonating a large bomb at Los Angeles International Airport.

Even when terrorists strike in the cities, they often flee to the heart-

lands. This cancerous tumor inside the body of the United States of America has metastasized widely. More of these dangerous people are going to surface in this country. Some, perhaps more than you'd expect, will be captured somewhere off the beaten metropolitan path.

Attack on the President?

George W. Bush told us no lie. It will be a long, hard road to avenge—as I think we must—the horrors of September 11. Our nation will be misunderstood. It's happening already, worldwide, and we're seeing it in microcosm in our own country. On the day of the incident, a certain high profile newscaster implied that the President was in hiding. The President was doing his job, which included denying the enemy one of its prize targets. Not since JFK has a President been in so much personal danger. Having given the “dead or alive” order on the megalomaniac false Moslem bin Laden, the bankroller of terrorists will doubtless “shoot back.” The next “big target,” if the group in question wants to show its power, may not be the Sears Tower or the Empire State Building. It may be George W. Bush.

Hate crimes

Within three weeks of the atrocity, the FBI was investigating some 90 serious hate crimes against people of Middle Eastern appearance or descent. These have been committed by troglodytes so clueless they can't tell Moslems from Sikhs. Such bozos certainly will have trouble figuring out that bin Laden and company are not a problem comprised of Moslems, but a problem comprised of radical Islamists.

A false Moslem

True Moslems understand that their faith rigidly prohibits the murder of innocent children and old people, such as those sacrificed in such great

number on the 11th. Only a false Moslem could claim to be ordering such murders in the name of God. Even those who think the suicide bombers were heroic martyrs will have some doubts about bin Laden when they figure out that bin Laden literally stole their souls. A Moslem who has murdered innocent children can no more go to heaven than one who has intercourse with pigs; this is clear from any reading of the Koran.

Investigations are even indicating that bin Laden and his co-conspirators sold stock short in a way to take advantage of the tragedy a short time before they caused it.

The genuine, devout Moslems will eventually figure out that the false Moslem bin Laden (a) is responsible for the deaths of countless innocent children and old people, as well as the younger and more able-bodied victims; (b) murdered his own followers by sending them on this murder/suicide mission; (c) stole those

men's souls; and (d) lined his pockets while doing it.

Honest Moslems are already vehemently distancing themselves from these heinous acts by heinous people. That will accelerate if and when all Moslem clergy, particularly those in the Middle East, frankly assess the actions of bin Laden and his followers in light of their holy book.

Arming pilots

Air travel needs to be made safer. This means more and more highly trained security personnel, and it would be facilitated by arming the pilots. This is not a radical step requested by the National Rifle Association. It is a logical step presented by the Airline Pilot's Association itself. In the '30s and '40s, most pilots carried guns. It was to protect the mail they carried. History shows no record of any problems with that: no pilots shooting copilots in arguments, no passengers

getting control of their guns, or anything similar. Pilots carried guns of their own aboard airlines through the '80s, when the mandate was made that ended the practice.

Yes, things will change. For now, keep your powder dry, your gun loaded and locked, your larder full, and your senses alert. Δ